

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 31622 111813Z

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ACTION EUR-25

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TAGS: PLAB

SUBJECT: LABOR MINISTER'S SOCIAL PRIORITIES FOR EUROPE

1. SUMMARY: FRENCH MINISTER OF LABOR GORSE ON DECEMBER 7 TOLD REPORTER THAT FRANCE HAS PROPOSED EEC SOCIAL PROGRAM AIMED AT COORDINATING COMMUNITY POLICY ON: FOREIGN WORKERS, IMPROVEMENT OF WORK CONDITIONS, WORKER PARTICIPATION, EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND - AS APPROPRIATE - THE CONCLUSION OF EUROPEAN LABOR-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS. END OF SUMMARY.

2. FRENCH MINISTER OF LABOR, GEORGES GORSE, IN INTERVIEW WITH REPORTER FROM INTERSOCIAL SAID THAT EEC MUST PROGRESS ON SOCIAL LEVEL AS ON ECONOMIC, THAT PUBLIC OPINION WILL BE FULLY COMMITTED TO BUILDING OF EUROPE ONLY IF WORKERS FEEL THEY ARE DIRECTLY CONCERNED.

3. GORSE SAID THAT, IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING OF EEC

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PAGE 02 PARIS 31622 111813Z

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, GOF HAD PROPOSED PROGRAM OF SOCIAL ACTION AND HAD OUTLINED FRENCH POSITION ON

ESTABLISHMENT OF EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR IMPROVEMENT OF WORK
CONDITIONS.

4. THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION OF SUBSTITUTING COMMUNITY ACTION
FOR NATIONAL ACTION IN THE SOCIAL SPHERE, SAID GORSE. THE EEC'S
TASK IS TO SET COMMUNITY PRIORITIES WHICH WILL BE IMPLEMENTED BY
MEMBER STATES IN THEIR OWN FASHION AND ACCORDING TO THEIR INDIVIDUAL
MEANS. THE AIM OF A EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY WOULD BE TO COORDINATE
ACTION ON EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, THE IMPROVEMENT OF WORKING AND
LIVING CONDITIONS, WORKER PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT, AND -
WHERE APPROPRIATE - THE CONCLUSION OF EUROPEAN LABOR-MANAGEMENT
AGREEMENTS.

5. FRANCE FAVORS THE SETTING OF PRIORITIES AND TIMETABLES.
WHILE REALIZING THAT EACH COUNTRY WILL HAVE ITS OWN PRIORITIES,
GORSE THOUGHT THAT, AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL, TWO ITEMS MERITED
PRIORITY CONSIDERATION: FOREIGN WORKERS AND THE IMPROVEMENT
OF WORK CONDITIONS. OTHER ITEMS RATING EARLY ATTENTION ARE
WORKER PARTICIPATION (IN MANAGEMENT AND PROFITS), AND TRAINING.
GORSE ALSO WARNED OF DEPRESSING EFFECT ON EMPLOYMENT OF CURRENT
OIL CRISIS AND URGED ACTION TO AID "THOSE MOST VULNERABLE TO
THE THREAT OF UNEMPLOYMENT".

6. COMMENT: NICELY BALANCED RHETORIC IN DRAWING DISTINCTION
BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES GAVE AWAY NOTHING OF
FRENCH LIBERTY OF CHOICE, YET PROJECTED GORSE AS GOOD EUROPEAN
CONCERNED WITH EEC SOCIAL IMAGE. NOTEWORTHY FOR ITS ABSENCE IS
ANY REFERENCE TO HARMONIZATION OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS OR OF
ANY OF THE OTHER FAMILIAR BUT DIFFICULT AREAS IN WHICH THE
HARMONIZATION OF NATIONAL LABOR LAWS HAS BEEN ANTICIPATED BY
TREATY OF ROME.

7. GORSE'S EMPHASIS ON FOREIGN WORKERS AND EMPLOYMENT THREAT
REFLECTS CURRENT FRENCH CONCERN OVER EFFECT OF OIL SHORTAGE,
FIRST IMPACT OF WHICH NOW BEING FELT IN AUTO INDUSTRY, ONE
AREA OF CONCENTRATION OF FRANCE'S LARGE IMMIGRANT WORKFORCE.
IT ALSO REFLECTS GOF'S SENSITIVITY TO FREQUENT CRITICISM IN
LABOR CIRCLES THAT EEC ACTIVITY IN SOCIAL FIELD LAGGING FAR
BEHIND ECONOMIC ACTION, THEREBY LENDING CREDIBILITY TO LEFT-
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WING LINE THAT EEC PRIMARILY A MECHANISM FOR "DEFENSE OF WEST
EUROPEAN CAPITALIST ORDER."
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